

NASA Astrobiology Academy

Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, California

Week 2 of the Academy July 2nd - July 8th, 2001

Written by:

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Monday:

Inspired by a lunchtime leadership seminar by Dr. Rose Grymes, the Academy students returned to work in the afternoon recharged with vim and vigor. After returning to home base, the unflagging pace continued as the group met to finalize the group project, a study of the metabolic dependence of iron reducing/oxidizing bacteria on pressure. Working into the wee hours of the morning, the group drafted a version of the proposal.

Tuesday:

At noon, the group presented the low pressure growth environment project to the staff and were given many new ideas to ponder. More research was done and a revised draft created. To regroup, the Academy headed to Lake Tahoe for some team building exercises, tours, and talks. Once at Tahoe, a viewing of the Academy video from last year inspired everyone to undreamed-of heights.

Wednesday:

Happy 4th of July. The Academy spent the day performing complicated team building exercises while cruising about Lake Tahoe aboard the Skipper III (thanks to Dr. Douglas O'Handley, Astrobiology Academy Director and All-Around-Nice-Guy) and while hiking up to Five Lakes for an alpine swim. After dinner, the crew met at the docks to discuss the day's activities and watch the fireworks. Nothing else happened that evening.

Thursday:

Accompanied by the rising sun, the group headed to Reno to visit the renowned Desert Research Institute. The crew toured the facility and was privy to lectures on topics ranging from terrestrial life in extreme environments to the possibilities of life on Mars and Europa. After this tour, the crew fueled up in Reno before heading back to Tahoe to prepare for the big day.

Friday:

Rise and shine. Shortly after dawn, everyone headed down to the south fork of the American river, accompanied by much singing and good cheer, for a

day of whitewater rafting and a leadership seminar. The rafting was, in a word, intense. Paddling over Class III rapids, the Academy-ites began to really understand the value of communication and thus, a new sense of well-being was born. Once we regained shore, John Livacich gave a seminal talk on the importance of leadership and communication. Pondering the importance of such issues, the crew headed back to Tahoe, where everyone enjoyed a wonderful dinner at Jake's restaurant.

Saturday:

The crew started out early in the day with a crisp cruise aboard the Skipper III, water skiing and knee-boarding. In the afternoon, the group drove to a remote waterfall in the mountains with a beautiful lagoon at the top. Trust was developed in the ensuing rock climbing endeavors and cliff-cannonballing. Many took a personal moment to just take in the awe of nature. That evening, there was an early trip to Squaw Valley where ice-skating was the main event. The group was in awe of the talents of our own competitive figure skater. Later on, the group parted ways. Half practiced their probability in Reno, and the other half met some locals and watched some refined comedy.

Sunday:

Rejuvenated by their weekend and infused with renewed enthusiasm, the group headed back to home base to prepare for the adventures of the coming week.

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